DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 404 IR 017 695

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TITLE Compositional Factors in the Study of Visual Images and Their Application to Television.
PUB DATE Oct 95
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Visual Literacy Association (27th, Chicago, IL, October 18-22, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aesthetics; *Design Preferences; Foreign Countries; Mass Media; *Television; Theory Practice Relationship; *Visual Arts
IDENTIFIERS *Composition (Art); Image Analysis; Television Aesthetics; Visual Design; *Visual Imagery

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the established principles of composition of visual images, discussing the application of those principles to moving visual images in general and television pictures in particular. Fundamental compositional principles of the visual communication media are explored in relation to television as an art form--namely, direction, proportion, balance, space, shape and form, level of sophistication, light and color, time and motion, tension, expression, and point of view. It is suggested that all of these areas should be considered equally important in the creation of an artistic television image. (Contains 14 references.) (Author/BEW)

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Compositional Factors in the Study of Visual Images and Their Application to Television

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by

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Chicago, IL, October 18-21, 1995

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Abstract

This paper reviews the established principles of composition of visual images, and discusses their general application to moving visual images and their specific application to television picture composition. Specifically, such fundamental compositional principles of the visual communication media as *direction, proportion, balance, space, shape and form, level of sophistication, light and color, time and motion, tension, expression, and point of view* are discussed in relation to their application to television as an art form. It is concluded that the established principles of composition of moving images should equally apply to television images to improve the artistic quality of the televised images.

Introduction

One of the bases on which the study of visual communication media aesthetics is built is composition. For any attempt to understand clearly, let alone to analyze and discuss the products generated by the visual communication media such as the various television genres, in addition to a basic knowledge of perception and cognition, a basic understanding of art composition in general, and composition of the visual communication media products in particular, is needed. The understanding of the complex web of the visual communication art products, through the study of composition, will also improve our ability to analyze and appreciate such art products, thus completing the threefold linear process of perceiving, understanding and appreciating visual communication media arts that encompasses the field of visual communication media aesthetics in general, and television aesthetics in particular.

The development of the arts of all Western societies coincides with the development of their religious, socioeconomic, cultural, and political beliefs and practices. It is, therefore, natural that to gain a clear understanding of their philosophical base, the evolution of the arts of a society should be examined historically. It is also necessary to look at the specific needs that generated the creation of the various art forms as this will reveal the various functions of the arts and will underline their nature and character. Today's visual communication media arts, such as entertaining television programs, should be examined on the bases of their historical evolution, nature, character, philosophies they embody, and functions they perform.

The beginning of the civilization of the Western World started with the arts created by prehistoric people. An examination of Prehistoric Art is a critical starting point because it assists us in understanding not only where and how humankind evolved, but what humans believed in and understood. In fact, that is the strength of all works of art, ancient and

contemporary. When tracing the evolution of art one traces the evolution of people's aspiration, fears, and basic beliefs, in short, one traces people's philosophies.

From the ancient worlds of Egypt and Mesopotamia evolved civilization and the historic revolution of the written word. To admire the perfection, harmony, and beauty of ancient Greek sculpture or Roman architecture is to react to the clarity of thought that was a unique characteristic of those historical periods.

The middle ages brought the beginning of the reign of Christianity; the Church dominated all aspects of life and its importance is reflected in the arts of that period. As the European Renaissance came to be in the fifteenth century, art took another turn by adopting the new and more scientific reading of the world to its techniques. By contrast, the Romantic Era responded to the logical and intellectual constraints of the Renaissance by appealing to the emotive side of humans. With contemporary artistic movements artists leaped away from conformity and created their own interpretations of the many different movements that developed simultaneously during the last century.

A closer look at these periods suggests that the various art products reflect the societies that created them. The arts provide the philosophical bases on which society is built. However, it is impossible to understand properly the philosophy reflected in the arts without having a clear understanding of their nature. Once that nature is reviewed, the characteristics of what one can label as art, and more specifically, visual communication media arts is defined. When drawing these limits and defining the meaning of art, the examination of the functions of the arts becomes simpler and more meaningful.

Art design and the studies of art history, philosophy, and criticism have always supported the development of art composition and aesthetics. In fact, the basic rules of composition of the arts stem from the skills and techniques of the artists. This is also true of the products of the visual communication media of film and television. The composition of film and television images stems from the producer's and/or director's expertise, craftsmanship, and techniques that they have developed and enhanced with such additional cumulative elements as observation, knowledge, sensitivity, intelligence, and understanding.

Mentioned in general terms, composition is defined as the act or process of composing. However, when it refers to the arts, it is defined as the act of arranging various elements into proper proportions, relations, or artistic forms (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1989). Even more accurately, art composition is the process of making a work of art (an art object or an art event) whose elements are structured according to the art's own specific rules of composition. Such a composition's end process is an art form. Although each art form is structured according to its own compositional rules and processes, literature suggests that there are a number of principles common to all visual communication media arts.

Compositional Principles of the Visual Communication Media Arts

The fundamental and most commonly found in visual communication media art rules of composition will be examined because the specific compositional principles that govern the medium of television—as it is shown later--derive from the traditional compositional rules found in other arts. This analysis, therefore, provides a better understanding of television composition and television production techniques, which, should they be followed, will enhance the artistic value of the televised pictures.

Direction

Direction is a universal rule that applies equally to all art forms—literary,

fine, performing, and applied. It refers to the specific orientation that directs the art reader, listener, viewer and decides where the action starts, how it progresses, and where it ends. Direction orients us in space and time and helps us to follow the logical evolution of events. It is not necessarily linear; it can go forward or backwards, it can go down or up, and so on. Usually, direction is provided by vectors (indicators) that lead the eyes or the ears to a particular location, regardless if such vectors are visually present or implied. For example, a novel has a starting point and obliges the reader to follow events as they develop, thus providing direction and orientation. Buildings and pictures are horizontally oriented (directing the eyes to the horizontal lines and action), vertically oriented (directing the eyes upwards or downwards), or even diagonally oriented (directing the eyes in a slant or diagonal upwards or downwards orientation).

In all visual communication media arts direction plays a fundamental role in the construction and subsequent understanding and appreciation of a particular art. The direction of a film or television picture is indicated by the flow, the sequence of events within the visual field, by its various index, graphic, or motion vectors, by zooming-in or zooming-out, and, generally, by the logical progression of the actions on the screen.

Although it is obvious that lack of direction and orientation in a film or television program hinder the communication purpose, directors occasionally confuse viewers' orientation with purposefully staged unspecified directions. Dream episodes, madness, or mental illness scenes often lack direction so that they can reinforce a sense of disorientation. These cases, however, are the exceptions to the rule that dictates that a good composition should have a clearly stated direction and a specified orientation.

Proportions

Proportional harmony in the arts has been used by artists from ancient times to modern days. It refers to the ways by which an artist distributes the art's various elements. All works of art and literature divide their domains into smaller entities, smaller sections, thus distributing them either symmetrically or asymmetrically. An architect divides an architectural structure into smaller units that make up the building. A novelist divides the novel into parts or chapters, thus dividing the novel into units that have a proportional relationship with each other and with the entire novel. A playwright divides, proportionally, the play into acts. A painter divides the visual elements within the frame either symmetrically (given even visual space) or asymmetrically (placing the visual emphasis on either side of the painting).

The architectural buildings of the ancient Greeks were built on the basis of the *Golden Section* that was considered a harmonious division of the parts of the buildings. According to the Golden Section on proportional division, the smaller section is to the greater what the greater is to the whole.

Art forms that are proportionally divided asymmetrically are considered to be dynamic and more interesting than those that are perfectly evenly divided and structured completely symmetrically. Furthermore, art forms such as novels, poems, theatrical plays, paintings, and film or television pictures whose parts are proportionally divided according to the Golden Section seem to be more harmonious and preferable. For example, if the important visual elements of a television picture are proportionally constructed according to the Golden Section (asymmetrically), the greater part will be placed in the left visual field whereas the smaller one will be placed in the right visual field. This is consistent with studies found in both the fields of neurophysiology (Ornstein, 1972) and communication (Fletcher, 1979; Metallinos & Tiemens, 1977).

Visual communication media artists

should be free to find their divine or perfect cutting points that divide proportionally the visual elements of the film or television pictures. However, empirical evidence of the left and right brain cognitive functions and the left and right picture orientation suggest that the Golden Section area of composition within the visual fields of film and television screens is more acceptable and appropriate.

Balance

Balance, as a compositional principle, is universal to all art forms, literary or otherwise. It is defined as the point at which all elements, visual or otherwise, come to an equilibrium, a starting point, in harmony or in perfect proportions. According to Arnheim (1969):

> Balance is the state of distribution of such factors as shape, direction, and location are mutually determined by each other in such a way that no change seems possible and the whole assumes the character of 'necessity' in all its parts. An unbalanced composition looks accidental, transitory, and therefore invalid. (pp. 1-31)

In all art forms, and particularly in the visual communication media art products, balance determines, in varying degrees, the artistic value of the artifact. For example, an unbalanced frame looks unprofessional and accidental, therefore, improper. A balanced picture could be *stable* (totally symmetrically structured dividing evenly all visual elements within the visual field), *neutral* (the visual elements are asymmetrically structured, dividing them unevenly), or *unstable* (the visual elements are not only asymmetrically structured but also pushed to their extremes creating tension, instability, uneasiness, and imbalance).

All human beings, and more so visual media artists, have the innate sense to see things balanced out. We try to harmonize the forces that pull in one direction or another the visual elements such as lights, colors, vectors, framing, sequencing of events, and arrangements of sounds. This innate characteristic of artists has been challenged repeatedly. The applications of either stable, unstable, or neutral balances in structuring visual images can produce excellent compositions and interesting expressions. The communication content, the message one wishes to convey, can be enhanced if assisted by the application of mutual stability or unstable balance. As Zettl (1990) suggests:

> Whether the balance should be stable, neutral, or labile is largely a matter of communication *content*. If you want to communicate extreme excitement, tension, or instability in relation to the event at hand, then the pictorial equilibrium should reflect this instability. You may do well to choose a labile picture balance. On the other hand, if you want to communicate authority, permanence, and stability, the pictorial arrangement, should, once again, reinforce and intensify this by means of a stable balance. (pp. 140-141)

Space

For the visual communication media of film and television, the manipulation of space is a major compositional factor. The concentrated space, shown in the camera's viewfinder and on the film and television screens, constitutes the canvas on which the directors compose the pictures. The bounded screens are, for the film and television directors, what the stage is for the theater directors: an area to stage theatrical events. However, whereas the theater space, the stage, is three dimensional, film and television screens are flat. Consequently, visual communication media directors must manipulate the screen space so that the pictures appear real, as though they have depth and are three-dimensional. A series of perceptual, cognitive, and compositional laws are at work here that

help the directors construct realistic, three-dimensional (in appearance only) pictures.

Concentrated Space: Film and Television Screens.

Directors of film and television compose visual images in a limited space; this limitation has its advantages and disadvantages both of which can be manipulated for the benefit of the visual message. For example, the limited space of the television screen forces the director to intensify the events and to direct the viewer's attention to the important parts of the scene. The directors of visual communication media of film and television should not ignore this principle.

Equally important in visual composition is the awareness and understanding of the differences between the visual world and the visual field as described by Arnheim (1969), Gibson (1950), Metallinos (1979), and Zettl (1990).

Aspect Ratio.

The film and television screens are both horizontally oriented with an approximate aspect ratio of 3:4 (3 units width, 4 units length). This type of space not only offers a greater flexibility in centering the action within it, but is based on the biological fact that our binocular vision, in its extremes, is 180°:150° (150° vertical vision—top to bottom—and 180° horizontal vision—from extreme left to extreme right). This space factor is very important for the composition of film and television pictures and it can be used to the advantage of the total synthesis of the visual image (Stone & Collius, 1965).

Illusionary Depth.

The manipulation of screen space to increase the illusion of depth is a great challenge for visual communication media artists. Successful directors and composers of visual images consider such depth principles as (a) positive and negative space interplay, (b) hierarchy of ground perception, (c) figure-ground relationships, and (d) z-axis space manipulation.

a. Positive and Negative Space

In film and television productions directors have to record the events that occur in the studio or field. The empty space between the camera and the objects (props, scenery, studio walls) or the subjects is the *negative space* that has to be considered in filming or videotaping. The occupied space by the objects and subjects is the *positive space* that provides the main images, often as figures, in the foreground. This space duality--its economic use and proper handling by directors--is an important factor in creating the illusion of depth and should be always considered by film and television media artists.

b. Hierarchy of Ground Perception

The creation of the illusion of depth in pictures also depends on the perceptual principle of gradual ground deterioration with distance. It states, in effect, that objects in the foreground are clearer than those in the middle ground that are clearer than those in the background. This hierarchy of visual perception, if reproduced properly in film and television staging, provides excellent depth cues and creates an illusion of real depth in film and television pictures.

The hierarchy of the ground perception principle has been commonly used and successfully applied by master painters and photographers and has generated a number of techniques of creating the illusion of depth in two-dimensional pictures such as *overlapping planes, relative size, linear perspective, aerial perspective, height in place, light, shadows*, and *color saturation*, which Zettl (1990) calls "graphic depth factors" (pp. 162-170) and recommends very strongly their careful consideration and application

in television programs.

c. Figure-Ground Relationship

The psychological principle known as figure-ground relationship, in which we assign certain elements to be the grounds upon which the figures are placed, not only is an excellent depth factor, but is, foremost, a key compositional principle in the construction of film and television pictures. Used extensively in painting, sculpture, photography, and film and television, it is considered one of the most basic compositional principles in both literature and the arts. As the stage constitutes the ground upon which the actors perform, so do the frames of film and television pictures constitute the background where the visuals are structured.

Maintaining this hierarchy of figure-ground produces clear, easily distinguishable, and realistic pictures. However, when intentionally violated and/or ignored, it produces serious anomalies in picture composition (Metallinos, 1989).

d. Depth Axis Space

To increase the illusion of depth in film and television pictures directors employ what Zettl (1990) calls "z-axis blocking" (p. 199) in which the action and motion of the events are vertical (screen inwards or outwards) rather than horizontal (screen motion from left to right or right to left). If we consider the picture's height to the *x* axis and its length to be the y axis, the picture's depth constitutes its *z*-axis or depth dimension. Placing the visual elements--and consequently the entire scene's action—on the z-axis space increases the illusion of depth and provides great flexibility of motion. As discussed in the third section, this staging technique that derives its origins from theater and film has been widely adopted by television directors and has become the most effective staging technique for television production.

Screen Space Forces

As it was previously stated, film and television screens constitute a concentrated, limited, and framed-in space that the directors must learn to manipulate to create images that communicate clearly the intended message, and at the same time to be dynamic, interesting, and aesthetically pleasing. Along with these space factors, directors must consider the established, in television arts, rules and guidelines known as the *field forces* (Arnheim, 1969; Gibson, 1950; Zettl, 1990). According to the field forces theory, within the concentrated space of the film and television screen, a dynamic interplay takes place between the visual and auditory elements. This has stimulated media researchers to examine these elements and to identify the particular agents that cause their interplay. The specific elements, or constructs, of the field forces theory are: (a) magnetism of the frame, (b) main direction, (c) asymmetry of the screen, (d) attraction of mass, (e) figure-ground relationship, (f) psychological closure or gestalt, and (g) vectors (Metallinos, 1979; Zettl, 1990). Each of these forces operates independently and in cooperation with the others, and requires close attention and careful consideration in film and television composition (Herbener, Van Tubergen, & Whitlow, 1979). They are excellent aesthetic agents that help to manipulate the concentrated film and television screen space for the benefit of the composition of film and television pictures.

In summary, the external and internal space factors constitute an important compositional principle regarding space manipulation of the visual communication media of film and television that can become an excellent tool in the hands of visual images constructors.

Shape and Form

As a composition principal of the visual communication media arts, the two terms, *shape* and *form*, refer to the specific configuration, construction, or appearance

of the images within the picture field—the film and television screens. It deals with the particular ways by which the constructors of visual images record images so that they appear to have certain shapes or forms that are unique to the individual producer and/or director. For example, a director's decision to film or videotape an entire program predominantly with medium shots (MS) or with extreme close-ups (XCU) constitutes the particular compositional form, the directing style—as it is sometimes referred to—or approach. In general, the large screen of film offers a different compositional form than the small vista of the common television set that demands different configurations such as close-ups (CU).

The terms shape and form are not the same when discussed in reference to visual perception processes. Shape refers to the external structure of an object whereas form refers to the specific content, the particular meaning, and format exerted by the shape or configuration. According to Arnheim (1969):

> Shape is one of the essential characteristics of objects grasped by the eyes. It refers to the spatial aspects of things, excepting location and orientation. That is, shape does not tell us where an object is and whether it lies upside down or right side up. It concerns, first of all of the boundaries of masses. (p. 37)

Form, on the other hand, is the agent that tells us about both location and orientation and provides the context for the discussion and understanding of the shape. In distinguishing the two terms Arnheim (1969) states:

> Actually there is a difference of meaning between the two terms. The preceding chapter dealt with the spatial aspects of appearance. But no visual pattern is only itself. It always represents something beyond its own individual existence which is like saying that all shape is the form of some content. (p. 82)

Whereas in the process of visual perception it is the shape that provides the codes for the interpretation of the art form, in the study of composition of visual images both terms are considered synonymous. They identify the structure, the configuration, the style of the images. The constructors of visual images should acknowledge the powers and the key roles of shape and form manipulation in the composition of pictures.

Level of Sophistication: Growth

In the construction of visual images an artist's level of sophistication is an important factor. It determines how good the images are compositionally and artistically. However, how does a producer and/or director of visual communication media of film and television obtain a level of sophistication, an understanding of visual image composition? What steps should be followed to reach the necessary level of sharp observation, knowledge, and the ability to understand visual complexity in the manipulation and construction of visual images with artistic considerations? Art philosophers, psychologists, designers, historians, and communicators reviewed earlier have provided some answers to this question although they have given different terms to this principle.

For perceptual psychologists of the visual arts such as Arnheim (1969), the level of sophistication is termed growth and is achieved by constant observation and systematic study of visual perception. The degree to which visual media artists do not simply copy reality but modify it, enhance it, and add new elements to it, suggests the level of growth of the artists. According to Arnheim (1969): "At best, the artist is able to 'improve' reality or to enrich it with creating a fantasy by learning art, or adding details, selecting suitable examples, rearranging the given order of things (p. 155)." For art philosophers and aestheticians such as Edman (1969), artists achieve a desirable level of sophistication when they compose art forms by following the threefold process of

clarification (distinguishing the object or event to be reproduced among its various other similar ones), *intensification* (exaggerating, modifying, or enriching the image representing the object or event), and *interpretation* (providing a meaning, a new context, to the art product).

According to visual arts designers such as Taylor (1964), sophistication, growth, and understanding in composing visual images are key compositional principles achieved through the systematic study of artistic designs and is measured by the artist's ability to *abstract* the unnecessary, to *maintain* the essential, and to *enhance* the important representation whether that is a building, a tree, a figure, or anything else. As Taylor (1964) suggests:

> But the artist is in his proper capacity is little concerned with imaging the actual relations which he discovers in nature as the architect. His business is to provide a system of scaled relations, not to copy one, to produce a vision of order, not to reproduce it. (p. 194)

The compositional principle of the visual communication media arts that we have called level of sophistication can be applied to these media successfully after media producers and/or directors study and experience the idiosyncratic nature of the media.

Light and Color: Colored Light

Light and color are the most profound aesthetic agents of all visual communication media arts but more so of the media of film and television. Light and color, of course, are two different components and, as such, they are treated separately by media theorists, artists, and analysts. The dichotomy between light and color should always be maintained when we study them as aesthetic agents in producing visual communication media images. Colorless light that produces black and white images has a different aesthetic quality than colored light as it is shown in the next section. However, since today's media of film and television produce, almost exclusively, films and television programs in color, these two aesthetic agents are considered as colored light here and are discussed together.

For film and television producers and/or directors light and color are what paint is for the painter. They are the materials that directors use to compose film and television pictures. As fundamental components in the construction of images, light and color require a detailed study of the instruments that produce them (the hardware of the media of film and television) and the techniques employed (the software of these media).

The instruments that produce colored lights in film and television are basically two types—directional and diffused lights. Directional lights are instruments that are used as the main light sources, are intense, and produce noticeable cast and attached shadows. Diffused light instruments produce soft colored lights, they are mainly used to fill in light in unlit areas, to eliminate the shadows produced by the directional lights, and, therefore, to even the lighting.

The colored lighting techniques established and widely used in the media of film and television fall under two major categories: (a) overall illumination and (b) lighting for volume. Overall illumination, known also as Notan (Millerson, 1972), or flat (Zettl, 1990), is used to provide a basic, overall illumination of a scene without any real concern for the creation of depth or cast and attached shadows. It is used simply to provide visibility to objects or events in the scene. According to Millerson (1972), the Notan technique:

> Depicts surface detail; outline; generalized tonal areas; but it is little concerned with tonal gradiation as such. Tonal pattern rather than form dominates. The effect is flat, two-dimensional. Photographically, Notan effect comes from high-key

(i.e., low-contrast, reduced back-light, absence of modeling light. (p. 78)

The lighting for volume technique, known also as chiaroscuro (due to the sharp dark and white areas it creates), is the technique that uses the lighting instruments to generate predominant cast and attached shadows, which, in turn, create depth and volume in the scene. This technique subdivides into three separate forms of chiaroscuro lighting: the Rembrandt technique, the cameo technique, and the silhouette technique.

The *Rembrandt* lighting technique, named after the Dutch master painter, emphasizes only selected areas of a scene and leaves the rest dark. It creates pools of light that illuminate only highly specified areas that are contrasted with the darker areas in a scene.

The *cameo* technique, named after the cameo stone ornaments, is a chiaroscuro illumination in which the background remains totally dark and only the figures in front are illuminated.

The *silhouette* technique is exactly the opposite of cameo in that it is the background of a scene that is lighted and the foreground remains totally dark, thus creating only a contour, or silhouette, of the figures in the foreground.

All visual communication media arts can, potentially, use either one or all of these techniques to create a certain mood and atmosphere, to provide volume or depth to images, and, generally, to produce pictures with artistic qualities. Lighting and color are the most fundamental compositional guidelines for the construction of images in visual communication media arts that the directors of these media should study and master.

Time and Motion

As light and color, time and motion are two distinct aesthetic agents that are involved in the compositional principles of visual communication media known as timing and movement. However, they are considered here as one for the following reasons: (a) Time generates motion, and motion is measured by time units in all visual arts, (b) the elements of time and motion are the basic ingredients that generate the principal of movement in the composition of visual media arts, and (c) these two aesthetic agents cooperate for the creation of the unique compositional principle of editing in the visual communication media of film and television.

As film and television time differ considerably, so does motion. The constructors of visual images use them interchangeably to achieve certain desirable effects, to involve the spectators in certain ways, and to convey specific messages. Both are powerful tools of composition of moving images but they are not unique to film and television.

In fact, Arnheim (1969) suggests that time and sequence that results in movement have a universal application to both the static and moving arts, including architecture and theater, or painting and dance, and he states that:

> The essential difference between the two kinds of artistic media is not that the one is based on time and the other on space but that the sequence in which the parts of a composition are to be related to each other is presented by the work itself in the dance or play whereas it is not in a work of painting or architecture. The temporal order of our perception is not a part of the composition when we look at sculpture or painting, whereas it is when we look at a dance. (p. 363)

The temporal order or motion that characterize the media of film and television involve even more the agents of time and motion and epitomize the uniqueness of these media that are known as moving images (cinematography or

television) media. As such, these two media follow their own rules of composition in their use of timing and movement.

Tension

As a compositional principal of the visual arts, tension is synonymous to dynamic composition and concerns the vibrant and vigorous structure of all art forms to arouse spectators' attention and involvement in the content of the art, the mediated message. Although all parts of an art form must generate the feeling of tension to be effective, it is the final structure, the end product, that characterizes an art form as a dynamic composition.

Tension, in the visual communication media arts of film and television, is both more readily created than in still pictures and more intense for obvious reasons. Tension is achieved by motion, and film and television images are moving images. Motion vectors created in the visual field provide the raw materials for the synthesis of dynamic and tension arousing pictures. However, they must be controlled so that the balance, proportions, depth, shape, and form of the moving images are maintained. Unlike painters and sculptors who create a sense of motion in paintings and sculptures, film and television directors have to create dynamic compositions of images in motion, a task that is difficult to achieve without adequate knowledge and experimentation, starting, first, with the composition of still pictures and gradually learning to compose moving images. Tilting the horizon, shooting from above or below eye level, zooming-in and out fast, panning gradually, and increasing the speed are examples of tension arousing composition, which, when done properly, produce vibrant, forceful, and dynamic composition of moving images. As this compositional principle has been an excellent guide to the masters of still visual arts, so it can be an effective technique when it is studied adequately and applied carefully by film and television directors.

Expression

Expression is the compositional principal that visual communication media artists use to communicate, in their own unique ways, their inner thoughts, feelings, emotions, and aspirations. It refers to the ways artists of the visual media, painters or film and television directors, shape the art forms to convey their feelings and thoughts. Just as a person's face expresses anger, sorrow, or happiness, so can a sculpture or any other visual image be made to express the artists' own ways of presenting—or rather representing--their aspirations. Expression is the creator's artistry.

In the visual media of film and television, producers and/or directors express their feelings and thoughts through moving images that record and represent events in the visual field. Therefore, their expressions must be conveyed both artistically and symbolically. Artistically, because the specific instruments, materials, and techniques of the film and television media must be exclusively used, and symbolically, because all art is symbolic to economize time and space and to avoid repetition. For example, to express the sadness of death, scenes recorded in funeral homes are usually in chiaroscuro lighting (low key, dark and white areas, predominant cast shadows); the Rembrandt lighting technique seems to express the atmosphere of the scene artistically. On the other hand, the mood of the funeral scene can be expressed symbolically if, for example, we add Antonio Vivaldi's (1678–1741) musical piece *Winter, Largo* from his famous symphony *The Four Seasons*.

Expression, as a compositional principle in visual communication media arts, is achieved with the close collaboration of the body and mind. The artist's body becomes the instrument, the vehicle that brings out the thoughts of the mind. Skill and imagination are at work when artists create works of art to express themselves. The proper cultivation of both

is a prerequisite for artistic expression that visual communication media artists must acquire through systematic study and extensive experimentation.

Points of View

How visual communication media artists use each one of the aforementioned compositional principles provides an indication of how artists look at things in general, and the media they serve in particular. For example, the more curious and concerned artists are about an issue, the more subjective and involved they become and vice-versa. In all visual communication media arts the point of view is a fundamental compositional principle with deep roots in other forms of art and literature as well. Basically, in life we can decide to (a) be only objective observers of events and issues, (b) to take a closer look at the issues, thus to become more curious and interested, or (c) to become involved, take a stand, and help to find a solution. The same attitude and practice can be taken by visual communication media artists when they compose visual images. They have the opportunity to use three distinct methods to structure the visual images, to tell a story, or to explore an issue, as follows:

The Objective Point of View.

Visual media artists who compose according to this principle remain, primarily, observers of events. They simply look at the events from a distance and remain indifferent to what they record. This point of view, compositionally, is achieved by long shots.

The Subjective Point of View.

Artists who compose according to this principle usually are curious and tend to look at things closely and subjectively, providing more details. This point of view, compositionally, is achieved by close-ups and detailed pictures.

The Creative Point of View.

Artists who adopt this principal of composition of images become totally submerged in the event they record and use the medium's instruments, materials, and techniques to restructure and change the event, creating a new one. This point of view, compositionally, is achieved by visual effects pertinent only to the specific medium such as superimpositions, fades, dissolves, chromakeys, video feedbacks, and many other such visual effects found in film and television media.

It is only natural that when making a film or recording a television program directors use these three approaches interchangeably. However, if they choose to, they can employ any one of these principles in composing their pictures. Zettl (1990), suggests this, and states that:

> When working with television or film--or any other photographic medium for that matter--we need to decide on a basic way of looking at an event. We can, for example, merely observe an event and report it as faithfully as possible, or else we can look into an event and try to communicate its complexity and psychological implications. We can also choose to use the technical potentials of the medium to create an image that can only exist on the screen. (p. 211)

In summary, visual communication media artists have at their disposal well established, compositional guidelines that they can use to create visual images with artistic potential. These fundamental compositional principles are the techniques for the creation of visual art forms.

Conclusions

The compositional factors in the study of visual images constitute one of the bases upon which television, as an art form, can be developed. It is evident, from the previous discussions that the aesthetic consideration of any visual communication media art form, in addition to perceptual and cognitive bases, the compositional

play the most important part. In discussing such bases, however, one must not overlook the role played by such related disciplines as art history, philosophy, nature and characteristics, and criticism of the visual communication media.

In the case of television's development as an art form, the principles governing the structure of its images are deeply rooted in the developed principles of the visual arts in general, and the moving visual media in particular.

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